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Chair: Mr. Sparber (Vice-Chair) ..... (Liechtenstein)

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In the absence of Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein), Vice-Chair, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/67/41, A/67/225, A/67/256, A/67/230 and A/67/291) (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/67/229) (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Glagolev** (Kazakhstan) said that there were ongoing efforts to bring the legal framework for children's rights in Kazakhstan into line with international standards. Cooperation between State agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations was promoted through a number of joint projects and activities.

2. Education was a particular area of focus: spending increased annually, currently accounting for 3.8 per cent of GDP, with a 99.8 per cent enrolment rate. Special attention was paid to providing access to quality education for vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, who currently accounted for 51.5 per cent of enrolment in special programmes — a figure which had doubled since 2006. Those who were unable to attend schools were given computers, Internet access and custom software, thus rendering high-quality distance education accessible.

3. To prevent child neglect, homelessness and juvenile delinquency, the Government had set up an Interdepartmental Commission for Minors and their Rights, a unified integrated database of all minors in difficult situations and "centres for adaptation" for temporary isolation and rehabilitation of underage offenders. Furthermore, national legislation had been harmonized with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, reducing the number of children without parental care, abandoned children and orphanages.

4. Currently awaiting review of its fourth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Kazakhstan had established within the Ministry of Education and Science a Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights, which included a council of NGOs, in order to ensure cooperation between State and non-State agencies and to monitor compliance with child protection laws. The "Children of Kazakhstan" programme implemented under the Government's strategic plan for 2011-2015 covered, inter alia, alternative forms of care for orphans and rural children.

5. **Mr. Motanyane** (Lesotho) said that despite the importance traditionally placed on children's rights and the wide ratification of the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child, the disheartening extent of violence against children meant that it was more urgent than ever to eliminate it. Committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, Lesotho placed children's rights at the centre of all decision-making processes and continued to strengthen relevant national laws and policies. In partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it was drafting the Children's Protection and Welfare Act as well as Court Rules to enhance the juvenile justice system and efforts to raise awareness on the Act were under preparation. The Government was also working with UNICEF to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which had increased the number of orphans and given rise to the phenomenon of child-headed households. The new Strategic Plan for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV included a community mobilization programme through which 81 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV had received transmission-blocking treatment in 2011, up from 71 per cent in 2010, and 60 per cent of HIV-positive children had had access to treatment.

6. Significant progress had also been made towards universal primary education, and although the Government might find it difficult to sustain the increased investment required, it would soon target secondary education. It had reinforced its commitment to children's welfare and protection, launching a toll-free national Child Helpline in 2008 to provide 24-hour counselling, support and protection, and had also set up Child and Gender Protection Units in police posts nationwide to guarantee a child-friendly, confidential reporting environment. Lesotho was deeply concerned by the surge in human trafficking and the particular vulnerability of children, especially girls. It therefore called on the international community to make every effort to eliminate that scourge and make the world safer for future generations.

7. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, his Government

had adopted a Law on Juvenile Justice in 2011 and drafted legislation on social and childcare. Victim-offender mediation continued to be a successful alternative justice mechanism for juvenile offenders. A comprehensive child protection database and a new National Action Plan for Children were being developed. Recognizing the need to intensify efforts to improve observance of children's rights and implementation of the Convention, the Government was enforcing relevant legislation, increasing resources earmarked for child protection, health care and education and strengthening institutions.

8. To create a safe environment for every child, the Foster Care Development Strategy and its Action Plan for 2012-2016 had been adopted to improve the efficiency and funding of the current system and to make it less restrictive. Intensive efforts to promote foster care would be launched shortly. While the legislative framework regarding children with disabilities was in line with international standards, further measures were necessary to ensure full implementation of the Convention, as inequality and stigmatization persisted. It was essential to deinstitutionalize the protection system and devise alternative solutions to ensure the full development of children with disabilities. Steps taken towards inclusive education and such new mechanisms as the creation of local and national databases and collaboration between health, social and education services would improve their status.

9. The Government had adopted the Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence (2011-2015) and, in 2012, had begun national actions under the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign. Effective protection required better recording of cases, capacity-building, temporary shelters and enhanced psychological support for victims, standards of service and quality control, monitoring and the efficient implementation of the Strategy and relevant laws. There was also a need to monitor the number of cases and scope of violence and to provide proper training for health professionals, teachers and social workers on the appropriate procedure in suspected cases of abuse. The country's standard-setting and institutional human rights framework would be further developed through negotiation for accession to the European Union and it would continue efforts to improve its systems and capacities.

10. **Mr. Giyorgis** (Ethiopia) said that his country respected its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had undertaken measures to implement it fully. Ethiopia had also acceded to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182). The Government had thus adopted a number of domestic laws and given directives to establish Child Rights Executive Committees, community-based childcare and foster-family care.

11. The Health Extension Programme placed emphasis on preventive and selective curative care. Those and other measures had resulted in affordable and accessible maternal, infant and child health-care systems across the country. Millions of lives had been saved with significant declines in the under-five mortality rate between 2002 and 2010; the infant mortality rate had nearly been halved. Substantial budgetary and other resources had been allocated for high-quality primary education, with remarkable success. The gross enrolment rate in primary schools stood at 95.9 per cent.

12. In light of the negative impact of certain traditional practices, the Government had undertaken appropriate legal reform and strategies such as awareness-raising campaigns, social mobilization and discussions on the role of children in shaping the nation. Child labour being deeply rooted in its broader socioeconomic problems, Ethiopia had also ratified the ILO Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention No. 138), issued Labour Law Proclamation No. 377/2003 to protect working children and established the Child Labour Forum. In accordance with the goal of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Government had adopted and was implementing a National Action Plan on Child Labour, executed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

13. Ethiopian law prohibited the conscription of any citizen, particularly children under the age of 18, for military purposes. The Government had established a National Steering Committee against Sexual Exploitation of Children, which had drafted an Action Plan on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children, focusing mainly on prevention and rehabilitation. Clear mechanisms and prudent legislative measures had also

been implemented to address trafficking of children, especially vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, girls, internally displaced children and asylum seekers. The promotion and protection of children's rights must not be viewed in isolation from national development endeavours, but should be among the priorities in development agendas.

14. **Ms. Hosking** (South Africa) said that her delegation welcomed the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it was vital for States parties to implement it through national legislation and programmes. Despite the progress noted in the reports, the scope of challenges facing the international community was evident. If measurable progress was to be made in addressing the unacceptable scourge of violence against children, it would have to redouble its efforts and match political will with adequate funding.

15. Children's rights in South Africa were protected by the Child Justice Act and the Children's Act, among others. The Government had made the issue of violence against children a priority and welcomed the importance given by the Security Council to the promotion and protection of their rights in armed conflict. The urgent need for a protective legislative framework in line with international standards to protect victims and criminalize such violence had been recognized; sufficient resources and capacity-building must therefore be provided. The United Nations must also cooperate with Member States to develop and implement sustainable, context-specific strategies to prevent the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

16. In line with its international obligations and Constitution, the Government had devoted substantial efforts and resources to the protection and development of children through early childhood development programmes, affordable health care and quality education. To address health barriers to learning, South Africa had implemented the Integrated School Health Package, which would include onsite health education and services to schools, and a social protection system providing child support grants to children and families. It cooperated with the Southern African Development Community and had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It therefore encouraged Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to continue working with regional organizations such as the African Union. The international community owed it to future generations to leave a positive legacy.

17. **Ms. Xareal** (Timor-Leste) said that her country was committed to protecting and upholding children's rights, as evidenced by its ratification, shortly after the restoration of independence, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. The Government's efforts, as outlined in the 2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan and the Five-Year plan recently submitted to Parliament, were focused on the promotion of general health and nutrition programmes for children and mothers, immunization programmes, access to drinking water and sanitation and access to preventive health education. Maternal and child health remained a priority and significant progress had been made in reducing child mortality through a broad child health policy expanding immunization services in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2009, the National Commission for Child Rights had been set up to develop child-friendly mechanisms for their promotion. A youth parliament had also been organized, resulting in policy recommendations on education, health, employment and recreation. Timor-Leste was currently finalizing its Child Code and Juvenile Justice Bill in response to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Other legislative measures had been taken, including the adoption of a national child rights action plan and the Law against Domestic Violence.

18. Believing in the key role of education in national development, the Government was devising ad hoc programmes to promote universal access to education and planned to invest in education and training to transform Timor-Leste into an educated and knowledgeable society by 2030, where its people contributed to economic, social and political development. To that end, the Government had earmarked an additional $1.7 million in the recent budget to rebuild and refurbish schools that had been affected by natural disasters. Efforts were also under way to improve teacher training and to provide mandatory schooling, guided by the principle of inclusiveness, within five years. Timor-Leste welcomed the Secretary-General's Education First initiative, which recognized that a high-quality, relevant and inclusive education system required a multifaceted approach. Accordingly, Timor-Leste would implement appropriate strategies and actions, as education must be supported by a safe, healthy and

economically stable community. Guaranteeing the rights and investing in the future of its youth were vital to the development of Timor-Leste.

19. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that Iceland welcomed the two recent milestone verdicts of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which had sent a powerful message that the recruitment of child soldiers would not go unpunished and had introduced vital child-friendly practices with regard to children's participation, both as victims and witnesses, in proceedings before international courts. Since 1998, Iceland's Government Agency for Child Protection had operated the "Children's House", an international model for child-friendly justice environments where protective, health, law enforcement and prosecution services worked together to investigate cases of suspected sexual abuse and other violence against children. Consequently, the juvenile justice system was more accessible and effective; Iceland was willing to share its experience with interested Member States.

20. Iceland was strongly committed to the right to education and placed great emphasis on its key role in social equality, long-term prosperity and young people's participation in society. It thus welcomed the Education First initiative, which would help to raise the political profile of education and strengthen the global education for all movement. As gender and poverty continued to be the main impediments to education, it was critical for societies to invest in the right of all children to education.

21. Violence against children and impunity for such crimes were unacceptable and must be addressed in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. Iceland strongly supported the calls from various United Nations bodies to address the prevention of and response to violence against children within the justice system. Despite the growing tendency to lower the age of criminal responsibility and increase penalties for children, there was no evidence that juvenile delinquency was rising or that harsher treatment of young offenders improved public security. It was far more critical to prevent and reduce children's deprivation of liberty. Violence as a form of punishment must always be prohibited; juvenile justice reforms must be guided by child- and gender-sensitive approaches with alternatives to criminal punishment.

22. To secure a prosperous and peaceful future for children, the international community must collectively address the challenges that they faced, while recognizing their valuable views on and capacities to contribute to the kind of society they wanted.

23. **Mr. Al-Shahwani** (Qatar) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Qatar had enacted legislation to protect the family, motherhood and childhood, and it had many Government and non-governmental institutions devoted to safeguarding children's rights, including the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children, the Childhood Cultural Center and the Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs. The legislative and institutional framework was supplemented by awareness-raising and capacity-building activities. In October 2011, in cooperation with the secretariat of the League of Arab States, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs had hosted the 17th meeting of the Arab Childhood Committee. He expressed deep concern over the daily violations of the rights of children committed by the Israeli authorities in Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and stressed that the Secretary-General's reports should reflect the suffering of those children.

24. **Mr. Kasymov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that his Government welcomed the Secretary-General's new Education First initiative and stood ready to participate in its implementation. Kyrgyzstan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, and had since taken steps to incorporate their provisions into domestic legislation, such as the recently revised Children's Code. A social protection strategy specifically addressed the needs of families and children living in difficult circumstances. Measures were being taken to increase the number of orphans and children from poor families entering higher education and to provide them with social housing. In addition, UNICEF, which had been working in Kyrgyzstan for some years, had recently signed a joint cooperation plan with the Government for 2012-2016.

25. It was vital to take account of the needs of children in post-conflict planning and in broader conflict prevention strategies. The different organs and agencies of the United Nations must cooperate to implement such strategies. His Government was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the

Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant instruments with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. In addition, the President of Kyrgyzstan had declared 2012 the year of the family, peace, harmony and mutual forgiveness.

26. **Ms. Daniel** (Botswana) said that despite laudable global efforts and recent progress in addressing violence against children, increasing socioeconomic disparities adversely affected children's rights and well-being. It was therefore critical to protect vulnerable children in all settings. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Botswana attached great importance to implementing the 2009 Children's Act. The Government had established the National Children's Council, the National Children's Consultative Forum and village child protection committees. In September 2011, with support from UNICEF, Botswana had launched the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2010-2016, the Child Sexual Abuse Communication Strategy 2010-2014, and guidelines on the Children's Consultative Forum, the Children's Act and Standards of Care.

27. There had been significant improvements in access to education and the quality of basic learning, while institutional capacity had been expanded in primary and junior secondary schools. The country also continued to implement its Early Childhood Development Policy and programmes to ensure child protection. Substantial investment in infrastructure to develop an extensive primary health-care system had expanded the full range of maternal and child health services, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. However, attaining health-related MDGs was hampered by the continued high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Having focused on Goal 5 under the MDG Acceleration Framework, the country had developed a strategy to tackle maternal mortality with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Ministry of Health was working to remedy gaps in service quality and bottlenecks in the delivery of actions identified in national strategies. Given the financial and human resource constraints Botswana faced, it was crucial to strengthen partnerships with the United Nations and other development partners from civil society and the private sector to complement Government efforts.

28. **Mr. Alaraimi** (Oman) said that his country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, and was in the process of drafting an act that would incorporate that Convention's provisions into national law. It had also ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and International Labour Organization Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 on child labour.

29. Coordination among Government agencies responsible for child welfare was the responsibility of the Committee for Follow-Up and Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There were plans to conduct a study of child abuse, and the Sultanate had designated 2012 as the Year of the Child. Oman had addressed the condition of children in its recent report to the Human Rights Council. Children in Oman were provided with free health care, and the education they needed for their future roles in society.

30. **Ms. Murillo Ruin** (Costa Rica) said that the international community must continue its efforts to promote children's rights and to accelerate progress towards the MDGs, which must take into account the interests and participation of children in line with the Convention and the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly. In order to overcome factors, including the economic downturn, natural disasters or violence and organized crime that impeded progress, the presence of United Nations funds and programmes was essential. Costa Rica received such technical assistance and support for national development efforts through UNICEF, in particular.

31. To remedy the inequalities they faced, the rights of indigenous children should be given greater visibility and included in national and international agendas, in particular through education that helped children to develop with dignity. The Ministry of Education was therefore focusing on intercultural education, particularly in indigenous territories.

32. The recent ICC and Special Court for Sierra Leone verdicts had done much to combat impunity by making perpetrators accountable for atrocities committed against children in armed conflict — children belonged in schools and playgrounds, not on battlefields. Costa Rica supported the mandates of the

Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative on violence against children, calling for their renewal with the required funding from the regular budget.

33. The experience of Costa Rica had shown that, as with regional and international partnerships, constant cooperation between State and non-State stakeholders had been vital. It continued its significant efforts to combat all forms of exploitation of minors through the National Commission against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and the Roadmap towards the Elimination of Child Labour in Costa Rica, a joint initiative led by the Ministry of Labour and supported by ILO. The Government would continue to give civil society a greater role through such mechanisms as the National Council for Children and Adolescents.

34. Recalling the recent International Day of the Girl Child and in tribute to Malala Yousafzai, she said that it was everyone's duty to mobilize to change the social norms that restricted girls' rights and limited their opportunities.

35. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that with an estimated 1.3 million children classified as vulnerable in his country, the Government was committed to protecting children's rights as enshrined in relevant international and regional human rights treaties and had made it a priority to translate all such instruments into domestic law. It was incumbent on the State to provide children with the basic necessities and to allow them to participate in matters affecting their rights and needs. To that end, it was investing the requisite human and financial resources and implementing programmes to ensure the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 2, 3 and 4. The implementation of deliberate policies, with support from strategic partners, had resulted in universal access to basic education and progress towards universal access to health care. However, despite the gains, the Government still faced social and cultural challenges such as the scourge of HIV/AIDS. In rural and peri-urban areas, it often resulted in child labour and forced early marriages that not only perpetuated poverty by removing girls from education, but also exposed them to greater health risks from complications of pregnancy or childbirth.

36. The Government had stepped up efforts to create a protective environment for children through a number of relevant national policies and laws. In addition to the review and reform of existing legislation, the State had created the Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health and set up specialized police units and child-friendly courts. It was also actively cooperating with partners to implement child-specific programmes such as social cash transfers and school feeding programmes for those in need, free basic education and a school re-entry policy and free health care for pregnant girls.

37. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that his country was fully committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and his Government had recently signed the third Optional Protocol. In 2010, it had adopted a new Law on Protection of the Rights of the Child; regional children's rights units and municipal child protection units completed the institutional framework for its implementation. The Action Plan for Children 2012-2015 ensured their basic rights and protection. In 2006, the Parliament had adopted domestic violence legislation to coordinate the institutional response to reported cases of violence against women and children and provide support and shelters for victims. Domestic violence in all its forms had recently been criminalized and children at risk were either placed in protective custody or kept in the home environment. All of the measures adopted had been drafted in close cooperation with relevant civil society organizations.

38. While early marriage and other customs contrary to international human rights law were banned, some cases persisted in certain rural areas. Consequently, efforts were being made to raise awareness and induce change among minority groups. The Ministry of Education and the Council of Ministers also provided free textbooks and meals to Roma children and all children living in poverty.

39. The Government was committed to improving the situation of children with disabilities through decentralization and deinstitutionalization, establishing State-funded centres throughout the country and mainstreaming the children in regular schools. In closing, Albania called on Member States to act together to save the children of Syria.

40. **Ms. Shaheed Zaki** (Maldives) said that Maldives had achieved universal free primary education and made significant progress in expanding access to secondary education and beyond and remained committed to developing and sustaining achievements in education, particularly for children with special

needs, and early childhood care and education. The 2012 Pre-Schools Act was part of efforts to formalize early childhood education and make it equally accessible. The State was also committed to improving children's health and well-being through affordable, more accessible, high-quality health care. Although the persistently high levels of malnutrition remained a challenge, child survival had improved as utmost priority had been given to reducing infant and child mortality rates, which had declined in the past 10 years.

41. Despite many initiatives, improved awareness and changing attitudes, children continued to suffer and witness violence. Domestic law protected children from physical and psychological abuse, yet a 2008 national study had revealed violence both in the home and in schools. The Maldives had implemented many of the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, establishing a child helpline in 2010. Many legislative and regulatory initiatives had been undertaken to improve the protection of children, including the 2009 Special Measures for Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse Law which had led to an increase in the number of cases prosecuted. The proposed Evidence Bill would also facilitate prosecution and conviction; the current revision of the Children's Bill would better align domestic law with the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

42. The shooting of Malala Youssafzai was a horrific reminder of the urgent need to address the significant challenges faced in advancing children's basic rights, which were denied every day. The recruitment of children into the armed forces and their trafficking, sale and sexual exploitation by organized crime were a great concern to the international community. The Maldives, in its national capacity and as a member of the Human Rights Council, would continue its efforts to combat such acts. The promotion and protection of children was a shared responsibility that required concerted effort by Governments, greater multilateral collaboration and investment.

43. **Ms. Vadiati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country was concerned about the practice of targeted killing of individuals alleged to be involved in terrorist activities and the high number of deaths of children and women resulting from night raids on housing carried out using United States weaponry. That practice could set a dangerous precedent; it therefore urged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to address that issue in his next report to the General Assembly. The latest report of the Special Representative (A/67/256) failed to address the impact of foreign occupation on children and therefore an important principle of international humanitarian law relating to armed conflict. A clear picture of the humanitarian situation of children living under foreign occupation was needed.

44. Like other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Iran was deeply concerned that some 69 million children of primary school age had no access to education, especially in Africa and Asia. Without accelerated progress towards education for all, national and international poverty reduction targets would not be achieved and inequalities between countries and within societies would widen. It therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's Education First initiative and hoped that it would give fresh impetus to the global movement to achieve quality, relevant and inclusive education for all by 2015.

45. The Islamic Republic of Iran was strongly committed to protecting the rights of children and had therefore established a national institution dedicated to promoting implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, a new comprehensive law on the protection of children had been ratified by Parliament.

46. **Ms. Teo** (Singapore) said that Singapore had become party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, but its journey to give its children the lives they deserved had begun in its early years as an independent State in the post-World War II era. The Compulsory Education Act provided that all children must complete primary education and more than 90 per cent of each primary school cohort went on to secondary school. Singapore had specialized schools for talented children and post-secondary education options were similarly broad. Support was given to children with mild special needs to attend mainstream schools, while special education schools catered for those with more severe disabilities. Government subsidy schemes covered school fees and other costs such as textbooks, school uniforms and a daily breakfast, which ensured that children from low-income families were not denied the opportunity to gain an education.

47. Developments in health care had resulted in low mortality rates among mothers and infants, and life expectancy at birth stood at 81.8 years. All pregnant women had access to comprehensive antenatal care, including HIV screening, and their babies were delivered by doctors or trained midwives. Children were immunized against preventable diseases at no cost to parents and comprehensive health and dental services were available in schools.

48. The employment of children under 12 was prohibited under the Employment Act, while the Children and Young Persons Act protected children against abuse, neglect and exploitation and provided for the rehabilitation of children who had broken the law. The Women's Charter protected girls against sexual exploitation and the Child Protection Service worked with the police, schools, hospitals and social services to ensure that children in distress received timely, appropriate help. Family service centres had been established in the community to provide further social support for disadvantaged families and children.

49. **Mr. O'Brien** (India) said that in India, home to 400 million children and young people under the age of 18, investing in the future of its youngest citizens was recognized not just as an economic necessity but a moral imperative. The rights of children were enshrined in both the national Constitution and the national policy on children adopted in 1974. However, the 2004 National Charter for Children provided further protection for children against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, as well as in such areas as health care and education. The Government was working to address children's needs under its 2005 plan of action and an Integrated Child Development Services programme, which provided supplementary nutrition for children in low-income and disadvantaged communities and regular monitoring of their nutritional and health status. It also provided children with vaccinations, regular health check-ups and non-formal education between the ages of 3 and 6 years. Under the Constitution, education was free and compulsory for children up to the age of 14 years and a public-private partnership had been established to enable poor children to attend private schools with financial support from the Government.

50. To address infant and child mortality the Government's wide range of programmes included a universal immunization programme, a sanitation campaign and a reproductive and child health programme. Since 2011 India had been polio-free thanks to its nationwide polio vaccination programme. Measures in other areas included an integrated child protection scheme covering offences against children not currently addressed in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.

51. The National Commission for Protection of Children's Rights had been established in 2007 to provide for speedy trials of offenders who committed crimes against children and a law to protect children against sexual offences had been adopted. Eradicating child labour was a priority for the Government, and employment of children under 14 was strictly prohibited. Lastly, to protect girls in particular, India had banned sex-selective abortion and child marriage, taken steps to narrow the gender gaps in education and declared 24 January "National Girl Child Day".

52. **Mr. Alcántara Mejía** (Dominican Republic) said that children's fundamental rights were guaranteed by the Code on the protection and fundamental rights of children and adolescents adopted in 2004. With regard to health care, the number of infants under 1 year of age who had been vaccinated against the main preventable diseases under the country's immunization programme had increased significantly, but many Dominican children continued to suffer nutritional deficiencies and stunted growth. The Government was therefore giving priority to promoting and protecting the well-being of all family members, but especially children and adolescents who were vulnerable, neglected or at risk. As part of its educational reforms, mobile classrooms had been set up throughout the country, while efforts to eliminate child abuse included the creation of a telephone helpline for advice and reporting of cases of abuse or missing children.

53. At the regional level, the Dominican Republic was working with other Central American countries to devise effective strategies to implement the recommendations made in the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. It had also signed a cooperation agreement with UNICEF and was working to implement its new country programme for 2012-2016 designed to accelerate fulfilment of the MDGs by focusing on children and adolescents in the poorest and most marginalized communities, increasing investment and closing national gaps. At the national level, 13 of the 57 specific objectives of his country's national development strategy related to the protection of children's rights. Lastly, the Government's poverty

reduction initiatives included its solidarity programme and other programmes designed to create income-generating opportunities for vulnerable families and communities and promote the comprehensive development of children.

54. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) said that eliminating all forms of violence against children was a priority for his Government and it therefore welcomed the report on protecting children from harmful practices in plural legal systems with a special emphasis on Africa, issued in 2012 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and Plan International. Harmful practices were rare in Angola but there had been some cases of children being accused of witchcraft and subsequently abused or abandoned. The Government was therefore working with civil society to eliminate those practices and all forms of violence against children.

55. The establishment of the National Council for Children had strengthened the country's monitoring and statistical system, and the Government was working to protect children's rights as part of a national plan that contained 11 commitments to children. In 2008, the Government had created a national system of indicators to measure progress made in achieving those commitments and strengthen the country's data collection and analysis capacities. The National Council for Children monitored and evaluated implementation of the commitments on a quarterly basis.

56. Other developments included the adoption of a general law on the comprehensive protection and development of children and the establishment of a helpline for children to provide them with specialized social, legal and psychological support. A national children's fund had been set up to finance action for children. The tourism code of conduct had been developed to protect children against sexual exploitation in that context, and strengthening of controls at airports and borders helped prevent trafficking in children. The Government was also working with UNICEF to implement a national development programme designed to improve the social and economic conditions of Angolan children. Specific progress included the construction of schools under the Schools for Africa initiative and the recent eradication of polio.

57. **Mr. Khammoungkhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the rights of children could not be realized without eradicating extreme poverty; the international community must therefore step up its efforts to achieve the MDGs and other globally agreed commitments.

58. His country's initiatives to promote and protect the rights and interests of children included a national plan of action for children, a national programme designed to combat the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, and a national nutrition strategy. In addition, the Government had amended several laws covering the rights of children, such as the law on education, the labour law and the law on the protection of the rights and interests of children. The National Commission for Mothers and Children issued policy guidelines and recommendations to the Government and mainstreamed women's and children's issues into the development agenda at all levels through its nationwide networks.

59. At the regional level, his country was actively contributing to the implementation of both the Declaration adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on its commitments to children and the ASEAN plan of action for children designed to promote regional cooperation in enhancing the survival, protection and development of children within the ASEAN region.

60. **Mr. Rachmianto** (Indonesia) said that at the regional level his country continued to work with other ASEAN countries to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children through the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and its Strategic Framework and Plan of Action for Social Welfare, Family and Children for 2011-2015. At the national level, Indonesia was focusing on fostering a social environment that was child-friendly and safe, and had strengthened its legal framework with the adoption of a 2012 law on the children's criminal justice system. It had also ratified the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

61. On the monitoring side, Indonesia had developed a database to allow cases of violence against children, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children to be recorded and reported. In addition, the Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection had

been established in 2009 to formulate and evaluate child protection policies and coordinate national actions to protect children. The Government was also implementing a child social welfare programme in 33 provinces and was working with all stakeholders to disseminate the principles laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to provide relevant training. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission disseminated the provisions of the national legislation on child protection, collected data, dealt with complaints and monitored and evaluated implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

62. In 2010, the Government had adopted a plan of action on eliminating violence against children and established outreach programmes and social welfare institutions to help street children. With a view to eliminating child marriages, Indonesia had established centres in schools and religious institutions to provide information and counselling on adolescent reproductive health and had extended the period of compulsory education from 9 to 12 years starting in 2013. A programme had also been established to prevent children from dropping out of school, which included scholarships for poor children.

63. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that her country was committed to protecting the health of children and women, especially the most disadvantaged groups and those in rural areas. It therefore supported the "Every woman, every child" initiative and had joined the global movement launched by UNICEF under the banner "Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed", which was designed to intensify action to reduce preventable deaths of mothers and children. The Government was working with local authorities and other institutions to combat hunger and malnutrition and ensure that women and children in Monaco and its partner countries were vaccinated and treated for disease.

64. The Government was also focusing on eliminating human trafficking, especially the trafficking of children, and had renewed its cooperation agreement with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It had also signed a cooperation agreement with OSCE to combat human trafficking in a neighbouring country and promote the social integration of 500 children without parental protection. To combat violence against children the Government was participating in a Council of Europe programme designed to build a Europe for and with children. Lastly, education was crucial in promoting and protecting children's rights and Member States should ensure full respect for that right, as well as the specific rights of girls.

65. **Ms. Sabja** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her country was fully committed to protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of children and was in the process of adapting its legislation to guarantee that they could be exercised. Education was essential for a child's development and by law, Bolivia was obliged to develop the potential of children with disabilities, with no discrimination of any kind.

66. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated into the country's Constitution and was reflected in the Children's Code that regulated the system of prevention, protection and comprehensive care for children. The 2006 National Development Plan was designed to reduce maternal and child mortality, while the Zero Malnutrition Programme had successfully reduced chronic malnutrition and anaemia among children.

67. The Bolivian Constitution expressly prohibited child labour and a grant programme had been established to encourage children to remain in school. In addition, a literacy programme had recently been completed successfully. The Government had also adopted a law declaring 2012 the year of combating violence against children as part of its efforts to end that scourge.

68. Respect for the human rights of children and adolescents was a guarantee of rights and freedoms, development and peace for the whole population. Bolivia was committed to complying with the Convention on the Rights of the Child through measures that included an intergenerational perspective and that ensured the well-being not only of children and adolescents, but also of the family and the community.

69. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that his country had made considerable progress in protecting the rights of children and had enhanced its institutional and legislative frameworks. The Child Care and Protection Act of 2004 protected children against abuse, neglect, exploitation and ill-treatment and included provisions designed to address their educational, physical and emotional needs. It also laid down the responsibilities of both the State and parents relating to the welfare of

children and the penalties imposed in the case of non-compliance. At the institutional level, the Child Development Agency had overall responsibility for abused, neglected and abandoned children, as well as those with behavioural problems, while the Office of the Children's Registry received and recorded reports of child abuse. The Office of the Children's Advocate provided legal representation for children whose rights had been infringed by Government ministries, departments or agencies.

70. Despite that progress, Jamaica continued to face financial and other challenges in promoting and protecting the rights of children, and violence both against and by children was a source of particular concern. To address that problem the Government had drafted a national plan of action for an integrated response to children and violence for 2011-2016, which was designed to foster an environment that protected children against violence, abuse and exploitation by establishing community and family-based rehabilitation, reintegration of children in conflict with the law and home-based care for children without family care. The Government was also working to strengthen public-private partnerships and community-based programmes and improve parenting skills as part of its comprehensive, holistic approach to addressing violence in society.

71. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that his country's legislation was based on the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but its child protection measures had been further strengthened by its ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the second and third Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Malta had also acceded to the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children by virtue of the Protection of Children (Hague Convention) Act of 2010.

72. The Office of the Commissioner for Children had been set up in 2003 to ensure the enactment of legislation on children's rights and promote children's interests through the media and through meetings with parents and children. Malta had also launched a draft national children's policy which contained recommendations on how to further improve and promote children's rights taking into account economic, social and demographic changes. The policy was designed to give children a voice and encourage their active citizenship in order to close the gaps between policy and practice. Another recent development was the enactment of the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act of 2010, which had introduced an offenders' register listing all those convicted of crimes against minors.

73. **Ms. Alfeine** (Comoros) said that the situation of children in sub-Saharan Africa was a source of grave concern and urgent measures were needed to break the intergenerational cycle of extreme poverty and address underlying factors including family composition, the distribution of family resources and the status of women. Her country continuously strived to implement the provisions of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by means of an integrated approach targeting not only children but also their families, communities and caregivers. The Government was working with UNICEF and its development partners to reduce maternal and child mortality, chronic malnutrition and deaths from communicable diseases. To combat HIV/AIDS, a national programme had been established, a free helpline had been set up to provide information on the disease and antiretroviral drugs were provided free of charge.

74. Primary education was free and the Government was focusing on ensuring that vulnerable children were able to enjoy that right through its national strategy for the protection of vulnerable children, which had resulted in the creation of three support centres for children who had been abused and the establishment of children's judges and courts for minors. The strategy was designed to address the different causes of vulnerability and guide civil society and other stakeholders in developing appropriate action plans. Given the enormous financial constraints the country was facing, the Comoros called on its development partners to provide additional support for its efforts to promote the well-being and full development of children.

75. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his Government's commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children was demonstrated by its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child

Labour. In addition, the national Constitution guaranteed the rights of children and the Government had adopted various policies and laws, including a 2011 national policy on children and a national plan of action for children, as well as a law on violence against women and children. A five-year project on the empowerment and protection of children was being implemented to create a culture of respect for children's rights.

76. At the regional level, India had endorsed the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia and the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

77. A comprehensive national education policy adopted in 2010 ensured education for all with free education for girls at the primary and secondary levels. Free textbooks and child nutrition programmes were helping to reduce drop-out rates and a trust fund had been set up to ensure that gifted children from poor backgrounds obtained an education. The Government was working to improve the nutritional status of adolescent girls and promote delayed marriage, and was focusing on the necessary care during the first 1,000 days of life. It had extended maternity leave from four to six months and established a maternal health voucher scheme and mother's allowance to help poor families. A universal vaccination programme had helped to bring down the country's child mortality rate.

78. The Government was working with the private sector and NGOs to implement special programmes targeting disadvantaged children, street children and those with disabilities. Specialized hospitals and medical schools had been set up for children with special needs. Family values played a critical role in protecting children and Member States should therefore preserve those values.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.